The Gold Coin

1903 SOUVENIR 1913

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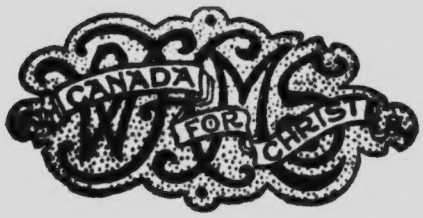
A Deaconess Story



DEDICATED TO

LADY GIBSON

BY

LAURA A. DILL

Toronto, June 5th, 1913.

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The Gold Coin.

A DEACONESS STORY.

LAURA A. DILL.

Two ladies were seated in an automobile which was standing in front of a store in a far Western city in this "Canada of Ours." The ladies noticed a group of three children in front of the store, two boys and a girl. The latter was crying bitterly, while one boy, with doubled fists, was facing the other—who was apparently twice his own age—and saying, "You knocked my sister down. You did it on purpose. You are a big coward." The elder boy laughed sneeringly and sauntered away saying, "Oh, you foreign kids."

"Mamma, I must see if that little one is hurt," said the younger of the two ladies, and before the footman could reach the door she had opened it, and was out of the car and beside the child. "Are you hurt little one?" said a voice whose penetrating sweetness of tone the child heard through her sobs, and looking up she saw a face of the most exquisite loveliness bending over her.

At the sweet words of sympathy the child sobbed so uncontrollably that the lady just put her arm around her, while the boy, touching his cap, said,

"I don't think Gretchen is very much hurt, lady." "Oh, no! but that boy stole my purse," sobbed the child. Hearing this, the boy turned so pale that the lady said, "Was there much money in your purse?" "All that we had in the world, and my mother is very ill."

Here the girl interrupted, "Oh! Herman, I had the gold coin that the Red Prince gave grandfather."

"Gretchen! why did you bring that?" At her brother's reproachful words the girl sobbed more bitterly.

As a crowd began to collect about the little group, the lady in the car beckoned to her daughter, who, with the children beside her, obeyed the signal. After a low-toned conversation between the ladies, the footman was summoned to receive orders, the children were taken into the car, and it moved slowly along the street. A few kindly, tactful words drew from the children a sad story of illness and privation, but their sorrow over the loss of the coin seemed to out-weigh all the other troubles of their young lives. The auto stopped before a large grocery store, and, after receiving some more instructions from the elder lady, the footman went in, soon returning with a clerk his arms laden with parcels. After the parcels were stowed away, the boy was taken up between footman and chauffeur, to point out the way to his home. The ladies talked to each other leaving Gretchen to herself, and her low sobbing gradually ceased altogether.

Just as the motor turned the last corner the boy, stooping down, spoke to his sister. He spoke in a low voice, but the ladies heard him distinctly. He whispered in a tone in which awe, mystery and admiration mingled, "Gretchen, I know who the kind lady is—the Red Prince's daughter." The little girl looked at the serene, beautiful face before her and exclaimed, "Herman!" but the ladies appeared not to have heard the whispered colloquy.

The car stopped before a small, two-storey, frame house. The ladies followed the children to the second floor and entered a room—a room which, though a living-room, with a part screened off for a tiny kitchen, was dainty and home-like in its appointments. In this room the ladies paused; but, hearing the agonized tones of a man's voice and startled cries from the children, they, too, entered the inner room while their servant, with his arm full of parcels, stood at the door of the outer one. It was a sad sight that met the eyes of the good women, who, without one thought of danger to themselves, answered the cries of distress.

On the bed lay a beautiful woman deaf to her husband's cry, "Margaret! Wife! don't leave me"; to Herman's pleading, "Mother! Look! here is your boy"; or to Gretchen's plaint, "If our good deaconess were only here, she would help mamma." One glance, and the lady, whom Herman had said was the Red Prince's daughter, took command of the situation. A few words to the young lady who left the room, and then, with her vinaigrette, she was helping to revive the fainting woman, saying in softly reassuring tones, "She has only fainted."

Some of the wine they had brought proved effectual, and the blue eyes unclosed and looked into the beautiful face of her whom she ever after called "My Good Angel." "Wife! Mother! exclaimed husband and children, while Herman said, "Now mother, you will get well, here is our brave Red Prince's daughter." The mother smiled at them all, then the ladies took the children from the room, for the physician for whom they had sent had arrived. The friends, whom Providence had sent those poor people, did not leave until a nurse was in charge of the sick woman, and other arrangements had been made for the comfort of them all.

When the ladies came to the house next morning, they found the doctor there. He said his patient, Mrs. Lowenberg, was much better, but that the husband was very ill with rheumatic fever. He said he would make application for the man's admission to the hospital, but he was a much surprised man when he was told to secure a private ward and everything needful at the lady's expense.

After his departure, the lady whom Herman proudly called "My Red Prince's daughter," talked with the sick man a few minutes, but his mind was wandering. Accompanied by Herman, she then went to see the mother, but Gretchen remained with the young lady. In answer to the question, "Who is your dear deaconess?" the child told of their lives since coming to Canada.

They had lived in Toronto at first where the father had a class in French and German, and the mother one in music. The children went to school,

they had a comfortable home and all was happy untill Mr. Lowenberg was taken ill with pneumonia. Then came days that were "dark and dreary" The family had regularly attended a Presbyterian Church, but were still strangers, among hundreds of other worshippers, until one glad day when Gretchen had a new Sunday School teacher, a sweet-faced deaconess. The teacher noticed the child's white face and sad expression and detained her and Herman after Sunday School. A few kindly sympathetic questions were asked and answered, and the deaconess accompanied the children to their home. She went into that home of illness and privation, and a happy day it was for the strangers, in a strange land. She helped the wife, exhausted to the point of illness herself, care for the sick man, and thanks to her they found friends worthy of the name. The deaconess was the friend of each, but especially was she "Gretchen's dear deaconess."

"Is there not a deaconess in your Church here, little one?" asked the young lady. "No. No one speaks to us at Church or comes to see us. I wrote to my deaconess in Toronto and asked her to come here. I wish she would come. Lots of people need her, and so do we."

When the young lady told her mother of her conversation with the child, there came a flash of light into the elder lady's beautiful eyes, and she said softly, "And a little child shall lead them."

When the ladies came the next day to see the sick woman, they took the children to the hospital to

inquire as to their father's condition. The superintendent said Mr. Lowenberg was very ill, but that a good constitution would help greatly in the battle for his life. "Is your father a soldier, laddie?" he asked Herman. "No! my grandfather was. He fought for the Red Prince and saved his life in the battle of Wiesenthal." "That accounts for it all. His talk is of the Red Prince and his daughter. He wants to see the daughter, and I had to promise that he should to-morrow. We have to humor delirious patients," said the nurse laughing.

When the "Good Ladies," as Mrs. Lowenberg's nurse called them, left the children, the young lady said "Mamma, what are you going to do about the poor man and his and the childrens' illusion? I do not wonder at it for you are so like the daughter of the Red Prince, whose picture Herman showed me" Her mother said, "I shall go to see him to-morrow and do all that the Red Prince's daughter might be expected to do. You know, dear, he is a compatriot of mine and far from the Fatherland."

Faithfully did the lady carry out this resolution. To the sick man while in delirium, to the children she was the daughter of the Red Prince of Prussia, one of the heroes of the Franco-Prussian war, and her daughter Gretchen's Princess. Mrs. Lowenberg progressed rapidly towards recovery, and she and her new-found friend had many quiet talks; and happy results followed the apparently chance-meeting of the ladies and the children.

One of the first steps taken by the ladies was to call upon the pastor of the church, which Mrs.

Lowenberg and family attended. After a long talk with that faithful but over-burdened servant of Christ, the lady offered to pay the salary of a deaconess for a year, and her daughter suggested that Gretchen's deaconess be asked to accept the position. The delighted and gratified pastor thanked the ladies, and said he would write to the Training Home at once. "Do you know the name of the deaconess I am to ask for, madam?" The young lady laughed. "No, only Gretchen's deaconess, but Mrs. Lowenberg will tell you."

"Certainly! and I am going to see her at once, and then to the hospital to see the husband. God will surely bless you, madam, for your goodness to those worthy people; and as for your generosity in making it possible for us to have a deaconess among us, I feel certain that when our people once have her they will not let her leave, and another year the money will be provided by the congregation," said the pastor as he escorted the ladies to the waiting auto.

That afternoon as the ladies were entering the hospital grounds—they were taking the children to see their father—Gretchen sprang to her feet exclaiming, "Princess! Look! there is the boy that stole my purse."

The boy heard the child's words, and ran quickly from sight, while the chauffeur, touching his cap, said, "Madam, I'll know him again, and I'll catch him, too." "All right Scott, but get a detective," said the lady, while the little girl said excitedly, "Oh! if we could get the coin back, Princess, I

would be so happy."

Scott and a detective located the young thief, who was glad to give up the coin, and to get off with a word of warning from the detective.

When the ladies came with the coin it was to say Good-Bye, as they were going on to the coast to join the rest of their party. When Gretchen heard the ladies were going away, she was heart-broken. "I lost my dear deaconess, and now when I found the loveliest Princess in the world, she will be lost, too," said the child sorrowfully. "No! No! not lost, we will come to see you again when we return from British Columbia; and Gretchen, see what I have here," said the young lady. As she saw the familiar German coin the child smiled through her tears, saying, "Thank you, Princess," then turning to her brother she said, "Oh, Herman! how glad father will be." But tears still filled the eyes of Heaven's blue, and the lady said, "Little one, I have brought you a gift, something to help you to remember me."

When the child opened the parcel and found a photograph of her Princess, her delight was unbounded. "Now, Herman, I have a picture of my Princess," she exclaimed. 'Yes! and we will have the three pictures hanging on the wall, the Red Prince's in the middle, when father comes home," said her brother.

Sadly the children and their parents parted with the ladies who had brought such joy into their lives. The children had been happy dwellers for a brief time in the realm of fairyland; while to Mr. and

Mrs. Lowenberg they had brought hope and a new lease of life. The Red Prince's daughter had written such delicately-tactful letters to the relatives in England and Germany, that perfect harmony was, ere long, restored in their respective families.

When the Princesses—as they will long be to Herman and Gretchen—paid their promised visit, they found that Mr. Lowenberg had regained his health, and was filling a good position with rare acceptance. His wife, though still far from strong, was happy in a comfortable home, the gift of her parents. Herman was a happy school-boy, whom his father had dubbed K.R.P.D., Knight of the Red Prince's Daughter. As for little Gretchen, her face radiated happiness. 'Oh, Princess! it was you who brought my deaconess to live with us. I cannot love you enough—all my life," was her greeting. "I am so glad that she could come, and that she is living with you. Are you happy now, little one?" "Yes, if I could keep you, too." "Ah! little Gretchen, even your Princess has at times to take into consideration that important word of but two letters—If!"

The night after the ladies' farewell visit to the Lowenberg's in their new home, the deaconess, whom they had been the means of bringing to that far, western town, was nursing a child of the poor. Towards morning the little patient fell asleep, and the voluntary nurse went to the window to see the dawn of a new day. As she stood there, she thought of the illusion of her little friends about the two Princesses, who had been the means of her coming

to help the minister and his wife; of the lives she had touched and helped; of the happiness of her friends with whom she had a restful, happy home.

As the sun arose in majesty and flooded the boundless prairie with life-giving beams, the quiet watcher said aloud, a tremble in her voice, "Of this I am certain, it was an act of beneficence which any one of our Royal Princesses would delight to perform. May God bless them every one."